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HOUSE COMMITTEE ON HOMELAND SECURITY
HOUSE COMMITTEE ON EDUCATION AND LABOR

Congress of the United States
House of Representatives
Washington, DC 20515

March 11, 2021

The Honorable Charles P. Rettig
Commissioner
Internal Revenue Service
1111 Constitution Avenue, NW
Washington, DC 20220

Dear Commissioner Rettig:

I am writing to request that the Internal Revenue Service (IRS) extend the tax return filing season beyond April 15, 2021 to June 15, 2021. I am hearing from many of my constituents that, due to the ongoing COVID-19 pandemic, many Americans continue to face the same challenges that necessitated extending the filing season last year.

It is my understanding that COVID-related public health restrictions combined with a nation-wide slow down in U.S. Postal Service mail delivery has caused an ongoing backlog of unprocessed 2019 tax returns. According to information by the House Committee on Ways & Means, more than 11 million individual and business returns remain unprocessed, even as the new tax filing season has already begun. I have heard from many constituents who filed their taxes last spring but are still awaiting refunds.

Moreover, I am informed that your agency is still dealing with a backlog of unprocessed mail from 2020, hampering the efforts of the IRS and the National Taxpayer Advocate to provide help with COVID-19 economic impact payments and this year's tax season. For many people tax forms for this tax season may be more complex for those who did not receive correct payments in 2020. At the same time, many news reports indicate the IRS is experiencing overwhelming demand on its phone lines, making it challenging for people to get answers to their questions.

And adding to the complexities and uncertainties this tax season, the American Rescue Plan Act of 2021 (H.R. 1319), which passed Congress and was signed into law by the President on March 11, 2021, contains a provision related to unemployment compensation that is retroactive to tax year 2020. For taxpayers who have income from unemployment, the first \$10,200 is nontaxable for 2020. As a result, tax professionals inform me that they will have to delay filing client returns that include unemployment compensation until their tax programs can be updated to accommodate this provision, a process which usually takes as long as 2-3 weeks after a change in tax law. And practitioners and other filers will have to amend all returns containing unemployment income that were previously filed.

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Because of these many complex factors, in order to ensure all tax filers have the time and assistance they need to file their taxes, and to afford IRS staff additional time to help taxpayers and process returns in an accurate and timely manner, I urge the IRS to extend the tax filing deadline and waive all interest and penalties resulting from such an extension. Just as the IRS did during the 2020 tax filing season, I believe this move is appropriate to accommodate the additional strain these challenges and others have placed on individual and small business tax filers, tax practitioners and the agency.

Sincerely,

A handwritten signature in blue ink that reads "Diana Harshbarger". The signature is fluid and cursive, with the first name "Diana" and last name "Harshbarger" clearly distinguishable.

DIANA HARSHBARGER
MEMBER OF CONGRESS (TN-01)